

Congressional Gold Medal Awarded Posthumously to Victims of the 1963 Bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church

September 10, 2013

WASHINGTON — A Congressional Gold Medal was awarded posthumously today to Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley, the four young black girls who lost their lives in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 15, 1963. The ceremony was held at the U.S. Capitol Building.

The senseless, premature deaths of these young girls as they prepared for Sunday school galvanized the civil rights movement and sparked a surge of momentum that helped secure the enactment of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The 16th Street Baptist Church remains a powerful symbol of the movement for civil and human rights, and the ultimate sacrifices made by these girls are emblematic of many others who have lost their lives for the causes of freedom and equality.

The United States Mint struck and prepared the Congressional Gold Medal as authorized by Public Law 113-11. The medal's obverse (heads side) was designed by United States Mint Artistic Infusion Program (AIP) Master Designer Barbara Fox and sculpted by United States Mint Sculptor-Engraver Jim Licaretz. The design features the silhouette of four young girls, representing those killed on that fateful day. The victims' names are inscribed around the border of the design, with the quote *PIVOTAL IN THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY*. Additional inscriptions include *SEPTEMBER 15* and *1963*, which are incused across the silhouettes.

The medal's reverse (tails side) was designed by AIP Master Designer Donna Weaver and sculpted by Sculptor-Engraver Joseph Menna. The design depicts a view of the 16th Street Baptist Church with the quote *KILLED IN THE BOMBING OF THE 16TH ST. BAPTIST CHURCH* to the left of the image. Additional inscriptions are *ACT OF CONGRESS 2013* and *BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA*.

The public law that authorized the United States Mint to strike the Congressional Gold Medal also authorizes the bureau to strike and sell three-inch and 1½-inch bronze replicas. These medals will be available for purchase at the bureau's online catalog, <http://www.usmint.gov/catalog>, starting noon Eastern Time on September 11, 2013. The medals also can be purchased by calling 1-800-USA-MINT (872-6468). Hearing- and speech-impaired customers with TTY equipment may call 1-888-321-MINT (6468). The three-inch medals are priced at \$39.95 each, and the 1½-inch medals are priced at \$6.95 each.

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